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Human rights and cultural diversity

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 23 of General Assembly resolution 70/156, concerning which the Secretary-General invited States, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations to submit written information on efforts undertaken in this regard, and provides a summary of the information received. The submissions from Governments focus on measures to promote cultural diversity, especially through education, as well as measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

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Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Summary of information received from States	3
	Algeria	3
	Azerbaijan	3
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	4
	Colombia	4
	Mexico	5
	Morocco	6
	Norway	6
	Oman	7
	Portugal	8
	Russian Federation	8
	Serbia	9
III.	Summary of information received from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	10
IV.	Conclusion	11

I. Introduction

1. As of 13 July 2017, 11 replies from States were received to the invitation of the Secretary-General to provide information pursuant to paragraph 23 of General Assembly resolution 70/156, and a reply was received from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The replies are summarized in sections II and III below.

II. Summary of information received from States

Algeria

[Original: French]
[1 June 2017]

2. The protection of human rights and cultural diversity has been at the core of Algeria's cultural policy since the country's independence. Arts and culture, which have featured in its successive constitutions, are regulated by specific laws that protect cultural heritage, including traditional works, as well as by copyright and related rights. In addition to developing a cultural and arts infrastructure, Algeria has established entities to safeguard and promote cultural diversity, such as the Musée des arts et traditions populaires. It is also establishing a regional centre to protect intangible cultural heritage in Africa. The National Fund for Culture financially supports cultural enterprises and the production, distribution and dissemination of cultural products and services.

3. Algeria has taken a range of actions to preserve its national heritage and promote cultural diversity, such as the creation of an inventory of its intangible cultural heritage, the mapping of different cultural expressions and the recording of popular traditional music, as well as raising awareness and providing support for the dissemination of information and scientific research in this area. It has also strengthened cultural exchanges among its various provinces and has facilitated and supported cultural events, such as festivals and local and national celebrations that feature the country's cultural diversity, as well as large international events, notably the sixth international colloquium on sufism, culture and music.

4. Algeria strives to create conditions conducive to the preservation and development of its artistic heritage, such as by providing training to ensure the transmission and preservation of traditional skills. Education has also been a means to raise awareness of the positive values of pluralism and diversity in society. School curricula and the training of teachers have been adjusted for this purpose and culturally appropriate pedagogical methods, incorporating traditional approaches, have been adopted.

Azerbaijan

[Original: English]
[10 April 2017]

5. Azerbaijan has heightened its capacity to further cultural diversity. Its policy is influenced by its multiculturalism owing to its centuries-long history as a melting pot of religions, cultures and civilisations and as its unique position as a bridge between East and West. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is one of the Government's highest priorities, and safeguarding the cultural heritage of national minorities is a key priority as well. The Government funds radio shows in Kurdish, Lezgin, Russian and Georgian, as well as more than 15 newspapers and magazines and 5 local TV/radio channels in minority languages. Financial aid is regularly

granted to religious communities, such as the Caucasian Muslims Board, the Russian Orthodox Church of Baku and the Baku European Jews. In 2014, an international multiculturalism centre was set up to evaluate the suitability of multicultural models in other countries with the domestic multicultural framework. The Government designated 2016 as the Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan and launched a plan of action to protect and broadcast ideas of multiculturalism at the national and international levels.

6. Azerbaijan has hosted international initiatives and events promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue, such as the 2008 Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Culture, which adopted the Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue and led to the establishment of the Baku process aimed at developing a dialogue among civilizations, as well as several meetings of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, most recently in May 2017.

7. Azerbaijan actively collaborates with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and is a member of its Group of Friends. The seventh global forum of the Alliance, on the theme "Living together in inclusive societies: a challenge and a goal", was held in Baku from 25 to 27 April 2016. The forum brought together 4,300 individuals from 147 countries at 40 round tables and panels, exchanging a wide range of views on inclusive living in today's increasingly diverse societies.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

[Original: English]
[11 July 2017]

8. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multinational, multireligious and multicultural country that fosters multicultural dialogue in order to promote diversity and tolerance. In addition to the Law on the Prevention of all Forms of Discrimination, several laws have been passed on the protection of the rights of national minorities, Roma issues, freedom of religion and gender equality. Acts of destruction or damage to cultural and historical heritage are also criminalized under the country's criminal code. Several State bodies support cultural diversity, such as the Ombudsman Institution, the councils for national minorities, the Interreligious Council and the Missing Persons Institute. The Interreligious Council has published a glossary of religious terms to promote better knowledge of cultural diversity. Radio and television channels frequently air thematic content for minority groups and advocate the peaceful coexistence of members of different religions.

9. One key effort to protect the country's cultural heritage and renew the value of cohabitation is the restoration of cultural and religious objects that were damaged during the 1992-1995 conflict. Festivals and events of international importance promoting cultural diversity, including literary meetings, have also been held, such as an international art colony, held in Počitelj in June 2016, and an international art exhibition on the theme "Through history to the world heritage of UNESCO", held in August 2016, which brought together a large number of globally renowned artists.

Colombia

[Original: Spanish]
[19 May 2017]

10. The 1991 constitution recognizes and protects ethnic and cultural diversity. The Government has promoted cultural diversity in a number of ways, such as through national coordination and incentives plans, the promotion and diffusion of audiovisual and cinema products, support for cultural entrepreneurship, the

strengthening of the performing arts infrastructure and the formalization of the cultural sector, notably through a law on public performances.

11. A key element of Colombia's cultural diversity policy is the promotion of the rich diversity of the country's native languages, including 65 indigenous languages, 2 creole languages spoken by Afro-descendent communities and the Romani language spoken by the Rom people. Actions taken include the commemoration of the national day of native languages on 21 February; sociolinguistic self-diagnosis, which assesses the vitality of the country's native languages; and the celebration of "word circles" or cultural spaces through which indigenous leaders and elders identify measures to revitalize and document indigenous and creole languages. Signalling the post-conflict context of the country, the Ministry of Culture translated the Final Agreement for the Termination of Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Durable Peace between the Government of the Republic of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo into indigenous and creole languages.

12. The celebration of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) is an important opportunity to promote the visibility of communities of African descent in Colombia. The month of May has been officially designated for the celebration of the Afro-Colombian heritage of Black, Raizal and Palenquera communities, in commemoration of the abolition of slavery. The Ministry of Culture, in partnership with local organizations, has established the Chair of the above-mentioned Decade in Cartagena to promote a dialogue between academic research and local knowledge in the Caribbean region. The role of women in African cultural heritage is being promoted in an initiative on the theme "Women's genealogies in Afro-Culture", which was inaugurated in 2016.

13. Among policies and actions to promote cultural diversity and the recognition of the multi-ethnic character of the country, Colombia emphasizes the recognition and strengthening of indigenous cultures, in cooperation with indigenous communities. Strategic actions taken include the creation of additional space for the participation and representation of indigenous peoples; the restoration or construction of ancestral places known as "malokas" and other spaces for cultural revitalization; the strengthening of dialogue between the national cultural heritage system and indigenous organizational structures; and other outreach activities.

14. The Ministry of Culture leads the implementation of policy on cultural heritage, including intangible cultural heritage. Measures include outreach and training and measures to ensure the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainability of cultural heritage, such as the policy on the knowledge, safeguarding and promotion of traditional food and cuisines adopted in 2012.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[12 May 2017]

15. In Mexico, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples is mandated to design and carry out strategies for the preservation, dissemination, research and promotion of the country's indigenous cultural heritage, and also advocates for an intercultural approach to public policies at all levels.

16. Actions taken by the Commission include the organization of cultural events involving indigenous communities, the organization of related studies and the dissemination of publications reflecting the cultures, values and customs of indigenous communities. For example, under its indigenous rights programme, the Commission supported 480 community initiatives in 2016 targeted at the

revitalization, recovery or dissemination of their cultural heritage and benefiting 8,516 indigenous people. The Commission also supports indigenous media professionals in the production and realization of intercultural communication projects in various formats.

17. Among several events supported by the Commission in recent years, the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was celebrated on 9 August 2016 at the Mazahua Ceremonial Center in the state of Mexico. The event was chaired by the President of Mexico and was attended by representatives of 68 indigenous peoples of Mexico, demonstrating the Government's commitment to ensure that indigenous peoples can exercise their rights in a context of social inclusion.

Morocco

[Original: French]
[23 May 2017]

18. The 2011 constitution of Morocco marked a profound shift in the country's attitude towards cultural rights, in particular towards cultural and linguistic diversity, by affirming the country's unity as forged by the convergence of its Arab-Islamist, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassanic components and as nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean influences.

19. The constitution recognizes the Amazigh language as an official language of the country and a common heritage of all Moroccans. It also provides for the protection and the development of the Arabic language and the promotion of its use. Moreover, it calls for the preservation of the Hassani dialect as an integral component of Moroccan cultural unity. To implement these constitutional provisions, bills on the creation of the National Council of Languages and Moroccan Culture and on the establishment of the Amazigh language as an official language have been prepared.

20. In collaboration with the Royal Institute on the Amazigh Culture, established in 2001, the Ministry of National Education has taken steps to strengthen the teaching of the Amazigh language, including through the training of language teachers and inspectors. This commitment has been further reinforced in the 2015-2030 strategic vision for the reform of education, which seeks to ensure the progressive mainstreaming of the teaching of the Amazigh language at all levels of education as well as the allocation of the necessary resources.

21. Legislative measures have been taken to promote cultural expressions in the media. Specifications for national media accord importance to linguistic and cultural diversity and to the richness of the components of Moroccan identity. As such, programmes are broadcast in the official languages as well as in the Hassani and Moroccan dialects, and reflect such values as openness, tolerance and modernity. Cultural diversity is also promoted through reformed school curricula that foster human rights. Programmes and learning materials have been developed to educate citizens to understand their rights and duties and contribute to the promotion of democracy and tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of peoples. School manuals were also reviewed in 2016 in order to remove any content and images inconsistent with the principle of tolerance.

Norway

[Original: English]
[16 May 2017]

22. Norway's cultural policy recognizes the importance of cultural diversity and strongly emphasizes facilitating and promoting a plurality of voices and

expressions. With regard to Sami and other national minorities, the Parliament has recognized the need to protect their cultural heritage in line with the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

23. Activities in the arts and culture sector benefit from funding of several projects, such as a project that aims to enhance and strengthen employment opportunities for young artists and cultural workers with ethnic minority backgrounds. Funding has been provided to support Sami media, institutions and cultural events, such as the Riddu Riddu indigenous festival. Similarly, funding is generally allocated to the safeguarding, promotion and dissemination of knowledge about minority culture, such as the Kven language and culture, the Forest Finn Culture, and Judaism and Jewish culture.

24. As part of its 2017 presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Norway launched a Nordic project for the inclusion of immigrants and minority background populations in the arts and culture sectors, whether as audiences, artists, creators, cultural workers or disseminators of culture. Professional and amateur arts and cultural institutions take part in the project, which runs until 2019.

25. Promoting culture forms an essential part of Norwegian development policy. Support is provided to cultural practitioners and professionals and organizations and groups working for the development of a free and diverse cultural sector and for larger access to culture. Norway's official development assistance funding focuses on capacity-building and education, strengthening of partners in civil society and international cooperation. Recent examples include assistance provided to the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, the development of new music education curricula in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and core support provided to SafeMUSE, an initiative in Scandinavia to provide safe haven for musicians under threat of persecution.

Oman

[Original: Arabic]
[31 May 2017]

26. Cultural diversity is a component of the system of human rights in Oman, where Government policy in this area focuses on three objectives: supporting artists whose artistic production and marketing is promoted by the State; supporting writers whose literary work is broadly disseminated and showcased at international book fairs; and supporting artisans who are given the moral and material backing needed to practice their craft. As such, the Government has adopted legislation that allows skilled artists easy access to support service and enables their participation in international cultural forums so that they can further hone their talents.

27. Cultural diversity is an intrinsic part of the school curriculum and workshops on cultural diversity are routinely organized. A national capacity is being developed with a view to aiding the preparation of project proposals submitted by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, as well as events organized by the Fund. Omani cultural days are organized around the world, at which international actors are encouraged to engage with Omani culture and participants present exhibitions on traditional crafts, industries, documents and manuscripts. For example, an Omani cultural day was held in 2015 in Brazil and the cultural history of the Sultanate was actively discussed.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[13 July 2017]

28. Citizenship education plays a key role in the promotion and protection of cultural diversity in Portugal. The "Education for citizens" strategy seeks to contribute to the development of responsible, independent and united citizens who know and exercise their rights and duties through dialogue and respect for others, a democratic and pluralistic outlook, critical thinking and a creative attitude.

29. Portugal is one of the pilot countries of the Council of Europe's development of a new reference framework of the fundamental competences required for respectful democratic citizens in culturally diverse societies. Other reference documents to support citizenship education at all levels have been produced as well.

30. In the framework of the Strategic Plan for Migration (2015-2020), outstanding school-led initiatives to promote cultural diversity and the effective inclusion of children and young people with different cultural backgrounds have been awarded with the International School Seal. Similarly, the Intercultural Education Schools Network aims to promote the welcome, integration and educational success of all children and young people and to develop respect for diversity and create positive relations among children and young people of all backgrounds. Portuguese is offered as a second-language school subject to ensure that migrant children and other non-native speakers of Portuguese have equal opportunities to achieve educational success and are not subjected to discrimination.

31. Extraordinary educational measures have been taken to support the reception in Portugal of children and young people who have refugee status or are asylum seekers. The integration of Roma children into the school system is also the subject of a specific national Roma communities integration strategy, which aims to increase school attendance in the Roma community in order to ensure that all Roma children successfully complete their compulsory education.

32. Portugal has developed a kit for the collection of intangible heritage, a pedagogical tool designed to promote knowledge of intangible heritage and help young people to value it. For the 2016-2017 school year, the National Museum of Ethnology created an educational programme focused on awareness and education for multiculturalism. The social responsibility project of the General Inspection of Cultural Activities promotes the artistic creativity of people from vulnerable environments, such as the 2015 project on the theme "Make a difference and release an idea", which involved all prisons in the country.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[17 May 2017]

33. With 193 nationalities who speak 277 languages and dialects, the Russian Federation considers culture to be a national priority and recognizes it as an important resource of social and economic development. State policy on cultural rights is derived from a document on the foundation of State culture issued in 2014. The Government emphasizes access to literature and other printed materials for all its citizens, and has developed a universally accessible national electronic library to promote interest in Russian literary works. In addition, the year 2015 was designated as the Year of Literature, with more than 100 events organized in the Russian Federation and abroad. Steps have been taken, including the adoption of a federal law in 2014, to improve access to cultural heritage by persons with

disabilities and other mobility-impaired persons. Cultural heritage museums, movie theatres and libraries have been adapted for persons with disabilities.

34. Various provisions in federal legislation protect traditional cultures in the Russian Federation, while State policy in the area of cultural development includes the protection of traditional folklore and the cultural identities of different nationalities, small nomads and indigenous peoples. A number of measures have been taken to stimulate and support indigenous peoples, such as the creation of databases, registries and catalogues that allow the preservation of traditional knowledge. Centres for the promotion of public arts have been created throughout the country to support folklore and cultural creativity, in particular for minority nomadic communities.

35. Festivals, national cultural events, contests, concerts and folklore events devoted to reducing inter-ethnic barriers and raising awareness about various cultures and nationalities have been organized in the Russian Federation. An international youth camp on the theme "Dialogue" brought together young people from different cultural backgrounds and regions with a view to developing intercultural dialogue skills. An exhibition on the theme "Multinational Russia", organized in the framework of National Unity Day, was dedicated to the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity and the cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation. Moreover, the project on the theme "Pages of Russia" gives free access to the electronic MyBook library, which contains works of children's literature reflecting the country's ethnic and cultural diversity. International festivals of ethnic music and events aimed at the preservation and development of traditional culture, including handicrafts, have also been organized in several republics of the Russian Federation.

Serbia

[Original: English]
[2 June 2017]

36. The social and political system of Serbia follows the principle of protection of national minorities. Cultural policy in Serbia is based on open access to culture, respect for national traditions, diversity of cultural expression and affirmation and development of freedom of opinion, conscience and religion. Funds are earmarked annually to co-finance projects that disseminate information and publications in the languages of national minorities and that translate representative literary works from Serbian into foreign languages.

37. State policy on cultural diversity is reflected, among other ways, in an action plan for implementation of the strategy for prevention of and protection against discrimination, established in 2013. Moreover, based on the Law on Cultural Property, the safeguarding and use of cultural property are assured regardless of the ownership and religious or national characteristics of the property. The Law ensures the equal participation of all groups in public cultural life and provides for the creation of the National Council for Culture. The institutional and legal framework also seeks to strengthen inter-church and interreligious dialogue.

38. As to protection of national minorities, in addition to constitutional provisions, the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and the Law on the National Councils of National Minorities further strengthen the legislative framework supporting national minorities. For example, in areas where they constitute a significant portion of the population, the members of national minorities are entitled to receive public services in their language. In 2016, Serbia adopted an action plan for enabling national minorities to exercise the right to further improve their quality of life.

39. Cultural diversity is also promoted in and through education. Several laws govern the entitlement of members of national minorities to receive education in their mother language. Programmes relating to the preservation of cultural identity of national minorities have been integrated in school curricula. Moreover, civic education aims to instil in children and young people a spirit of respect for human rights and to foster tolerance and understanding among different ethnic, national and religious groups.

40. A number of other projects have been funded by the Government to promote and protect cultural heritage, including intangible cultural heritage. Initiatives have also been taken to restore cultural monuments that were destroyed and to protect those that are at risk of damage or attack.

III. Summary of information received from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

[Original: English]
[13 July 2017]

41. The programmes of UNESCO accord importance to the promotion of cultural diversity and the advancement of cultural rights. It has focused its action on safeguarding and transmitting cultural assets, practices and values, including those of minorities, and has advocated for their integration into international and national legislation, policies and programmes. It has promoted a positive discourse anchored in human rights and common values enshrined in shared heritage that respects the diversity of identities and that values pluralism, as exemplified by the Unite for Heritage campaign launched in response to attacks against cultural heritage in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. As the lead agency for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), UNESCO has produced tools to help address critical global challenges through intercultural and interreligious dialogue and to promote understanding and cooperation for peace. The UNESCO Conceptual and Operational Framework for Intercultural Competencies emphasizes that the high costs of intercultural incompetence, including the risk of war, make it essential to invest in activities to clarify, teach, promote and enact intercultural competencies. The UNESCO manual on intercultural competencies based on human rights proposes a simple dialogue-based exercise that focuses on conversation and reflexivity; it is currently being piloted by its field offices to develop adaptation to local contexts.

43. Freedom of expression, media development and media diversity are promoted by UNESCO to enable freedom of cultural expression and access to cultural diversity for all, and it aims to empower people with critical media and information literacy competencies to facilitate intercultural dialogue. In collaboration with more than 20 universities, UNESCO published two related yearbooks in 2016, on the themes "Media and information literacy: reinforcing human rights, countering radicalization and extremism" and "Opportunities for media and information literacy in the Middle East and North Africa", while open online courses in media and information literacy and intercultural dialogue were developed and launched in collaboration with the Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue University Network. In collaboration with the King Abdullah International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO was instrumental in the adaptation of the media and information literacy curriculum as a specialized training resource for interreligious dialogue.

44. Recognizing "Priority Africa" as one of its global priorities, UNESCO has launched initiatives that aim to foster inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies. In November 2016, the project "Pedagogical supports on the basis of African cultural heritage in post-conflict situations" produced 20,000 school notebooks distributed in 57 schools in 8 regions in Mali. At the eighteenth summit of the regional coordination mechanism of United Nations agencies in Africa, held in Dakar in March 2017, UNESCO put forward the theme "Culture as a priority for Africa" and highlighted the critical role and contribution of culture in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

45. Established by UNESCO in 2004, the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (formerly known as the International Coalition of Cities against Racism) is a global platform of more than 500 cities whose mayors have committed themselves to advocating for the defence of human rights, inclusion and diversity in urban spaces, with a focus on the fight against racism and discrimination. Concerted efforts of member cities aim to strengthen advocacy for global solidarity and promote inclusive urban development that is free from all forms of discrimination by sharing good practices, knowledge and expertise and by advancing joint action through the development of participatory city-level policies and initiatives. In April 2016, the first meeting of Coalition's Global Steering Committee, composed of mayors representing seven regional and national coalitions, adopted the Bologna Declaration, in which it emphasized that learning about rights and how to put them into practice is the basis for social cohesion and peace in multicultural societies and for promoting the full and meaningful participation of populations. A similar initiative on the theme "Welcoming cities for refugees: promoting inclusion and protecting rights" was launched in 2016 to promote a shared understanding of the reception and integration of refugees and migrants.

IV. Conclusion

46. **The majority of the submissions received reflect legal and policy frameworks and interventions that promote multiculturalism and tolerance and that protect groups at particular risk and their cultural heritage. The critical role played by education is broadly recognized and many submissions provide information on specific initiatives in schools and media campaigns, including civic and human rights education focused on instilling tolerance and the value of diversity of cultures. This is consistent with the importance attributed to cultural diversity in the 2030 Agenda, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.**